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Saturday likely date for Malik's attempt

Zaharah Othman

THE earliest possible date for Malaysia's marathon swimmer Abdul Malik Mydin to attempt the English Channel Challenge is Saturday when the temperature is expected to be 20 degrees Celsius and the sea calm.

It is hoped that the wind speed would be 15 knots.

These are the ideal weather conditions for Malik to swim but bad weather the past week had prevented him from taking the plunge since the scheduled date of July 23.

The last few days had seen the wind speed reaching 25 knots and several swimmers attempting the swim had to return to shore.

Announcing the latest development yesterday, Malik said the Channel Swimmers and Piloting Association has given him the priority to make the first attempt when good weather sets in.

This means that the nine other swimmers from around the world will have to wait in line after Malik makes his swim.

"It is not that I do not want to make the attempt. I have to listen to the advice of CSPA as well as Mike Oram, the navigator for the swim. They are the experts and they do not want to take the risk when the weather is bad."

Replying to critics, Malik said according to the rules laid down, once a swimmer starts a swim and had to turn back due to bad weather, it is considered a failed attempt. The swimmer will have to go back to the end of the queue.

An Irish swimmer was hauled back into her boat recently when the sea became choppy.

Malik admitted to feeling down and apprehensive as a result of several cancellations but accepted this as a challenge.

"Swimming the channel is not only sport. It is also about life. I have learnt to cope with all kinds of uncertainties," he said.

Keeping his spirits up are the daily messages of support he received from his supporters, the top of the list being Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, and Youth and Sports Minister Datuk Hishamuddin Hussein.

To supporters who came all the way from Malaysia and around England but had to return home before witnessing the swim, Malik expressed his gratitude.